

127/175043

CHILDREN AS 'PERSONS'

LIBERTY
VERSUS
VARIOUS FORMS OF TYRANNY

BY
CHARLOTTE M. MASON

[REPRINTED FROM "THE PARENTS' REVIEW,"]

PRICE 1/-.

PARENTS' NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL UNION
26, VICTORIA STREET, S.W. 1.
1921

CHILDREN AS PERSONS.

LIBERTY *VERSUS* VARIOUS FORMS OF TYRANNY.

"The mystery of a *person*, indeed, is ever divine, to him that has a sense for the godlike."—CARLYLE.

"We live by admiration, hope and love!

And even as these are well and wisely fixed,

In dignity of being, we ascend."—WORDSWORTH.

MANY of us were surprised to read the discoveries made on the site of the first capital of Assyria. Layard had long ago made us familiar with temples and palaces; but we hardly expected to learn that every house, even the smallest, appears to have contained a bath. In like manner, we are astonished to read of the great irrigation works accomplished by the people of Mexico before Cortes introduced them to our eastern world. To-day, we are surprised to find that the literature and art of ancient China are to be taken seriously. It is worth while to consider why this sort of naïve surprise awakes in us when we hear of a nation that has not come under the influence of western civilisation competing with us on our own lines. The reason is, perhaps, that we regard a person as a product, and have a sort of unconscious formula, something like this: Given such and such conditions of civilisation and education, and we shall have such and such a result, with variations. When we find the result without the conditions we presuppose, why, then we are surprised! We do not realise what Carlyle calls "the mystery of a person," and therefore, we do not see that the possibility of high intellectual attainments, amazing mechanical works, rests with the persons of any nation. Wherefore, we need not be surprised at the achievements of nations in the far past, or in remote countries which have not had what we consider our great advantages. This doctrine, of the mystery of a person, is very wholesome and necessary for us in these days; if we even attempted to realize it, we should not blunder as we do in our efforts at social reform, at education, at international relations. Pope's hackneyed line would come to us with new force, and it would be a mere matter of course that,

"the proper study of mankind is man."

The mystery of a person is indeed divine, and the extraordinary fascination of history lies in this, that this divine mystery continually surprises us in unexpected places. Like Jacob, we cry, before the sympathy of the savage, the courtesy

12p3CMC443

of the boor. "Behold, God is in this place and I knew it not." We attempt to define a person, the most commonplace person we know, but he will not submit to bounds; some unexpected beauty of nature breaks out; we find he is not what we thought, and begin to suspect that every person exceeds our power of measurement.

We believe that the first article of our P.N.E.U. educational creed—"children are born persons"—is of a revolutionary character; for what is a revolution but a complete reversal of attitude? And by the time, say, in another decade or two, that we have taken in this single idea, we shall find that we have turned round, reversed our attitude towards children not only in a few particulars, but completely.

Wordsworth had glimmerings of the truth: poets mean, not less, but a great deal more than they say; and when the poet says, "Thou best philosopher," "Thou eye among the blind," "haunted for ever by the eternal mind," "Prophet, Seer blest," and so on,—phrases that we all know by heart, but how many of us realize?—we may rest assured that he is not using poetical verbiage, but is making what was in his eyes a vain endeavour to express the immensity of a person, and the greater immensity of the little child, not any of whose vast estate is as yet mortgaged, but all of it is there for his advantage and his profit, with no inimical Chancellor of the Exchequer to levy taxes and require returns. But perhaps this latter statement is not so certain; perhaps the land-tax on the Child's Estate is really inevitable, and it rests with us parents and elders to investigate the property and furnish the returns.

Wordsworth did not search an unexplored field when he discovered the child. Thomas Traherne, a much earlier poet, whose works, as we know, have only recently been brought to light, is, I think, more convincing than he; because, though we cannot look back upon our child-selves as seers and prophets and philosophers, we can remember quite well the time when all children were to us "golden boys and girls"; when there was a glamour over trees and houses, men and women; when stars and clouds and birds were not only delights, but possessions; when every effort of strength or skill, the throwing of a stone or the wielding of a brush, was a delight to behold and attempt; when our hearts and arms were stretched out to all the world, and loving and smiling seemed to us the natural behaviour of everybody. As for possessions, what a joy was a pebble or a cork, or a bit of coloured glass, a marble or a bit of string! The glamour of its first invention lay upon everything we saw and touched. God and the angels, men and women, boys and girls, the earth and the sky, all belonged to us with an ineffable

12p4CMC443

sense of possession. If we doubt all this, even though a glimmering conviction comes to us in the pauses of our thought, why, it requires very little interpretative power to see it in the serenity and superiority of any normal baby child.

"How like an angel I came down!
How bright are all things here!
When first among his works I did appear,
Oh how their Glory me did crown!
The world resembled His Eternity
In which my soul did walk;
And everything that I did see
Did with me talk.

"The skies in their magnificence,
The lively, lovely air;
Oh how divine, how soft, how sweet, how fair!
The stars did entertain my sense,
And all the works of God, so bright and pure,
So rich and great did seem,
As if they ever must endure
In my esteem.

"The streets were paved with golden stones,
The boys and girls were mine,
Oh how did all their lovely faces shine
The sons of men were holy ones.
In joy and beauty they appeared to me,
And everything which here I found,
Which like an angel I did see,
Adorned the ground."—TRAHERNE.

We all remember the divine warning, "See that ye despise not one of these little ones"; but the words convey little definite meaning to us. What we call "science" is too much with us. We must either reverence or despise children; and while we regard them as incomplete and undeveloped beings who will one day arrive at the completeness of man, rather than as weak and ignorant *persons*, whose ignorance we must inform and whose weakness we must support, but whose potentialities are as great as our own, we cannot do otherwise than despise children, however kindly or even tenderly we commit the offence.

As soon as he gets words with which to communicate with us, a child lets us know that he thinks with surprising clearness and directness, that he sees with a closeness of observation that we have long ago lost, that he enjoys and that he sorrows with an intensity that we have long ceased to experience, that he loves with an *abandon* and a confidence, which, alas, we do not share, that he imagines with a fecundity no artist among us can approach, that he acquires intellectual knowledge and mechanical skill at a rate so amazing that, could the infant's

rate of progress be kept up to manhood, he would surely appropriate the whole field of knowledge in a single lifetime.

Do we ask for confirmation of what may seem to some of us an absurdly exaggerated statement of a child's powers and progress? Consider: in two or three years, he learns to speak a language—perhaps two—idiomatically and correctly, and often with a surprising literary fitness in the use of words. He accustoms himself to an unexplored region, and learns to distinguish between far and near, the flat and the round, hot and cold, hard and soft, and fifty other properties belonging to matter new to his experience. He learns to recognize innumerable objects by their colour, form, consistency, by what signs, indeed, we know not. As for the mechanical skill he acquires, what is the most cultivated singing as compared with articulation and the management of the speaking voice? What are skating and ski-ing compared with the monstrously difficult art of balancing one's body, planting one's feet and directing one's legs in the art of walking? But how soon it is acquired and the unsteady walk becomes an easy run! As for his power of loving, any mother can tell us how her baby loves her long before he is able to say her name, how he hangs upon her eye, basks in her smile, and dances in the joy of her presence. These are things everybody knows; and for that very reason, nobody realises the wonder of this rapid progress in the art of living, nor augurs from it that a child, even an infant child, is no contemptible person judged by any of the standards we apply to his elders. He can accomplish more than any of us could in a given time, and, supposing we could start fair with him in the arts he practices, he would be a long way ahead of us by the end of his second year. I am considering a child as he is, and am not tracing him either, with Wordsworth, to the heights above, or, with the evolutionist, to the depths below; because a person is a *mystery*; that is, we *cannot* explain him or account for him, but must accept him as he is.

Of course we must, say you; What else does the world do but accept a child as a matter of course? And it is only the faddists who trouble themselves with his origins. But are we not going too fast? Do we really accept children as persons, differentiated from men and women by their weaknesses, which we must cherish and support; by their immeasurable ignorances, which we must instruct; and by that beautiful indefinite thing which we call the innocence of children and suppose in a vague way to be freedom from the evil ways of grown-up people. But children are greedy, passionate, cruel, deceitful, in many ways more open to blame than their elders; and, for all that, they are innocent. To cherish in them that quality which we call inno-

cence, and Christ describes as the *humility* of little children, is perhaps the most difficult and important task set before us. If we would keep a child innocent, we must deliver him from the oppression of various forms of tyranny.

II.

If we ask ourselves, What is the most inalienable and sacred right of a person *quâ* person? I suppose the answer is, *liberty*. Children are persons; *ergo*, children must have liberty. Parents have suspected as much for a generation or two, and have been at pains not "to interfere" with their children; but our loose habits of thinking come in our way, and in the very act of giving their freedom to children we impose fetters which will keep them enslaved all their lives. That is because we confound liberty with license and do not perceive that the two cannot co-exist. We all know that the anarchist, the man who claims to live without rule, to be a law unto himself, is in reality the slave to certain illogical *formulae*, which he holds as binding upon him as laws of life and death. In like manner, the mother does not always perceive that, when she gives her child *leave* to do things forbidden, to sit up half an hour beyond his bed-time, not to do geography or Latin with his governess because he hates that subject, to have a second or third helping because he likes the pudding, she is taking from the child the wide liberty of impersonal law and imposing upon him her own ordering, which is, in the last resort, the *child's* will. It is he who is bending his mother as that proverbial twig is bent, and he is not at all deluded by the oracular "we'll see," with which the mother tries to cover her retreat. The child who has learnt that, by persistent demands, he can get leave to do what he will, and have what he likes, whether he get leave by means of stormy outcries or by his bewitching, wheedling ways, becomes the most pitiable of all slaves, the slave to chance desires; he will live to say with the poet:—

"Me this unchartered freedom tires;
I feel the weight of chance desires."

Indeed, he already feels this weight, and that is why he is fretful and discontented and finds so little that is delightful in his life. Then, "Would you restrict a child at all points?" say you, "must we be like that mother in *Punch*, 'Go and see what Tommy is doing and tell him he mustn't.' Or must he be like the schoolboy who gets possible marks for ten virtues, such as orderliness, punctuality, obedience, politeness, and so on, and carries off a distinction when he loses none of these marks?" Such a system would do away with the freedom of home, and, what is more, the child who has been brought up on

"do" and "don't," or upon the "marks" which stand for these, is laying no foundation of solid principles upon which to erect his life. Let him learn that "do as you're bid" is a child's first duty; that the life of his home is organized on a few such injunctions as Be true, Be kind, Be courteous, Be punctual, and that to fail in any of these respects is unworthy and unbecoming; more, let him be assured that such failures are wrong and are displeasing to God, and he will grow up to find pleasure in obedience, and will gradually gather those principles which should guide his life.

But the first duty of the parent is to teach children the meaning of *must*; and the reason why some parents fail to obtain prompt and cheerful obedience from their children is that they do not recognize "must" in their own lives. They *elect* to do this and that, *choose* to go here and there, have kindly instincts and benevolent emotions, but are unaware of the constraining *must* which should direct their speech and control their actions. They allow themselves to do what they choose; there may be little harm in what they do; the harm is that they feel free to allow themselves.

Now, the parent who is not aware that he is living in a law-ordered world, that he has to eat "the fruit of his thoughts" as well as that of his words and actions, is unable to get obedience from his child. He believes that it rests with him to say what the child *may* do or leave undone; and as he does not claim papal infallibility, his children find out soon enough that the ordering of their lives is in their own hands, and that a little persistence will get them "leave" to do what is good in their own eyes. People discuss the question of corporal punishment and think they see in it the way to get obedient children. It may be so, because obedience must be learned in the first three or four years of life, when the smart of a little slap arrests the child's attention, brings tears and changes his thoughts. As a matter of fact, it is hardly possible to punish some children unless while they are quite young, because the pleasure of displaying bravado under the excitement of the punishment occupies the child's attention to the exclusion of the fault for which he is punished. But the whole discussion is outside the question. The parent, the mother especially, who holds that her children's rule of life must be, "Children obey your parents for it is *right*," certainly secures obedience, as she secures personal cleanliness, or proper habits at table, because she has a strong sense of the importance of these things. As her reward, she gains for her child the liberty of a free man, who is not under bondage to his own wilfulness nor the victim of his own chance desires.

The liberty of the person who can make himself do what he

ought is the first of the rights that children claim as *persons*. The next article in the child's Bill of Rights is that liberty which we call innocence, and which we find described in the Gospels as humility. When we come to think of it, we do not see how a little child is humble; he is neither proud nor humble, we say; he does not think of himself at all: here, we have hit unconsciously upon the solution of the problem. Humility, that childish quality which is so infinitely attractive, consists just in not thinking of oneself at all. This is how children come, and how in some homes they grow up; but do we do nothing to make them self-conscious, do we never admire pretty curls, or pretty frocks? Do we never even *look* our admiration at the lovely creatures, who read us intuitively before they can speak? Poor little souls, it is sad how soon they may be made to lose the beauty of their primal state, and learn to manifest the vulgarity of display. I wonder would it not help us in this matter to copy the pretty custom taught to some continental children? The little girl who kisses the hand of an elder lady, with a pretty curtsy, is put into the attitude proper for a child, that is, she is paying attention and not receiving it. The lady-visitor, too, is taught her place; we do not lavish loud admiration on children at the moment when they are showing deference to us; but this is a detail. The principle is, I think, that an individual fall of man takes place when a child becomes aware of himself; listens as if he were not heeding to his mother's tales of his smartness or goodness, and watches for the next chance when he may display himself. The children hardly deserve to be blamed at all. The man who lights on a nugget has nothing like so exciting a surprise as has the child who becomes aware of himself. The moment when he says to himself, "It is I," is a great one for him, and he exhibits his discovery whenever he gets a chance; that is, he repeats the little performance which has excited his mother's admiration, and invents new ways of showing off. Presently, his self-consciousness takes the form of shyness, and we school him diligently, "What will Mrs. So-and-So think of a boy who does not look her in the face?" or "What do you think? General Jones says that Bob is learning to hold himself like a man." And Bob struts about with great dignity. Then we seek occasions of display for the children, the dance, the children's party, the little play in which they act, all harmless and wholesome, if it were not for the comments of the grown-ups and the admiration conveyed by loving eyes. By-and-by, comes the *mauvaise honte* of adolescence. "Certainly, the boys and girls are not conceited now," we say; and indeed, poor young things, they are simply consumed with self-consciousness, are aware of their hands and feet, their shoulders and their hair,

and cannot forget themselves for a moment in any society but that of everyday. Our system of education fosters self-consciousness. We are proud that our boy distinguishes himself, but it would be well for the young scholar if the winning of distinctions for *himself* were not put before him as a definite object. But, "where's the harm after all?" we ask; "this sort of self-consciousness is a venial fault and almost universal amongst the young." We can only see the seriousness of this failing from two points of view—that of Him who has said, "It is not the will of the Father that one of these little ones should perish;" and that, I take it, means that it is not the divine will that children should lose their distinctive quality, innocence, or humility, or what we sometimes call simplicity of character. We know there are people who do not lose it, who remain simple and direct in thought, and young in heart, throughout life; but we let ourselves off easily and say, "Ah, yes, these are happily constituted people, who do not seem to feel the anxieties of life." The fact is, these take their times as they come, without undue self-occupation. To approach the question from a second point of view, the havoc wrought on nerves is largely due to this self-consciousness, more often distressing than pleasing, and the fertile cause of depression, morbidity, melancholia the whole wretched train, which make shipwreck of many a promising life. OUR work in securing children freedom from the tyranny of self-consciousness must be positive as well as negative; it is not enough that we abstain from look or word likely to turn a child's thoughts upon himself, but we must make him master of his inheritance and give him many delightful things to think of: "*la terre appartient à l'enfant, toujours à l'enfant*," said Maxim Gorki at an Educational Congress held in Brussels before the war. So it does; the earth beneath and heaven above; and, what is more, as the bird has wings to cleave the air with, so has the child all the powers necessary wherewith to realize and appropriate all knowledge, all beauty and all goodness. Find out ways to give him all his rights, and he (and more especially *she*) will not allow himself to be troubled with himself. Whoever heard of a morbid naturalist or a historian who (save for physical causes) suffered from melancholia? There is a great deliverance to be wrought in this direction, and sentry duty falls heavily on the soldier engaged in this war.

The tyranny of self crops up in another place. The self-conscious child is very likely generous, and the selfish child is not noticeably self-conscious. He is under the tyranny of a natural desire—acquisitiveness, the desire of possession, covetousness, avarice—and he is quite indifferent and callous to the desires and claims of other people. But I need not say much

about a tyranny which every mother finds ways to hold in check; only this we must bear in mind: there is never a time in a child's life when his selfishness does not matter. We are indebted to the novelist who has produced for us that fascinating baby, "Beppino," and has shown how the pretty, selfish, wilfulness of the child develops into the vicious callousness of the man.* Selfishness is a tyranny hard to escape from; but some knowledge of human nature, of the fact that the child has, naturally, other desires than those that tend to self-gratification,—that he loves to be loved, for example, and that he loves to know, that he loves to serve and loves to give,—will help his parents to restore the balance of his qualities and deliver the child from becoming the slave of his own selfishness. Shame and loss and deprivation should do something where more generous motives fail; and, more powerful than these, is a strong practical faith that the selfish child need not become, and is not intended to become, a selfish man or woman.

Another liberty we must vindicate for children is freedom of thought. I do not mean that a youth should grow up like the young Shelley, chafing against the bondage of religion and law, but, rather, that, supposing all his world were "freethinkers," he should still have freedom of mind, liberty of thought, to reject the popular belief. Public opinion is, in fact, an insufferable bondage, depriving the person of his individual right to think for himself. This is a right which should be safeguarded for every child, because his mind is his glorious possession; and a mind that does not think, and think its own thoughts, is as a paralysed arm or a blind eye. "But," we say, "young people run away with such wild notions: it is really necessary to teach them what to think about men and movements, books and art, about the questions of the day." To teach them what to think is an easy rôle, easy for them and easy for us; and that is how we get stereotyped classes instead of individual persons, and how we and the children fail to perform the most important function of life—the function of right thinking. We exaggerate the importance of right doing, which may be merely mimetic, but the importance of thinking and right thinking cannot be overstated. To secure that a child shall think, we need not exercise ourselves in setting him conundrums; thinking is like digestion, a natural operation for healthy organs. Our real concern is that children should have a good and regular supply of mind-stuff to think upon; that they should have large converse with books as well as with things; that they should become intimate with great men through the books and works of

*Joseph Vance, by William de Morgan.

art they have left us, the best part of themselves. Thought breeds thought; children familiar with great thoughts take as naturally to thinking for themselves as the well-nourished body takes to growing; and we must bear in mind that *growth*, intellectual, moral, spiritual, is the sole end of education. Children, who have been made free of the Republic of Letters, are not carried away by *le dernier cri*, are not, in fact, the slaves of other people's opinions, but do their fair share of that thinking which is their due service to the State.

The last tyranny that we can consider is that of superstition. We have a notion that education delivers men from this bondage; but superstition is a subtle foe and retreats from one fortress only to ensconce himself in another. We do not lay claim to higher culture than the Greeks or even the Romans possessed; indeed, various nations of antiquity could give us points, highly cultivated as we think ourselves; but it is a curious fact that no nation whose records we possess has been able to deliver itself by literature or art, or highest cultivation, from the hideous bondage of superstition. The tragedies of Æschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, have all of them a single appalling theme, the arbitrary and reckless play of the gods upon human fortunes. Indeed, it has been well said that tragedy in a Christian age is impossible, because the hopelessness of any situation implies the ill-will of the gods; and it is cited in this connection that of Shakespeare's three great tragedies two are laid in pre-Christian times, and the third is brought about by a non-Christian person. This consideration throws an interesting light upon the whole subject of superstition. We do not impugn the gods any longer, but we say hard things of fate, destiny, and the like; Napoleon III. is far from being the only "man of destiny." We consult crystals, hold seances, have lucky and unlucky days, read our fortunes in our palms; even astrology is practised among us; and we believe ourselves to be half in play and hardly perceive the hold that superstition is gaining upon us. The fact would seem to be that a human being is so made that he must have *religion* or a *substitute*; and that substitute, whatever form it take, is superstition, whose power to degrade and handicap a life cannot be estimated. If we would not have our children open to terrors which are very awful to the young, our resource is to give them the knowledge of God, and, "the truth shall make them free." It is necessary to make children know themselves for spirits, that they may realize how easy and necessary is the access of the Divine Spirit to their spirits, how an intimate Friend is with them, unseen, all through their days, how the Almighty is about them to cherish and protect, how the powers of darkness cannot approach them, safe in the keeping of their "Almighty Lover."

We have considered several types of tyranny, none of which is external to the person, but all act within the bounds of his own personality, for—

"The mind is its own place and in itself
Can make a hell of heaven, a heaven of hell;"—

the heaven being, I suppose, when the man is at peace with himself and when his powers are freely and wisely exercised; the hell when the person is under no interior government and his powers are allowed to run to anarchy and confusion. Parents and children may aid and abet either state of things, so much so, that if a child's place is a well-ordered heaven, he has his parents to thank for his happy state; and, if he is condemned to a "hell" of unrest and fiery desires and resentments, are his parents without blame?

III.

So far, we have considered the negative attitude of parents and those *in loco parentis*; but there is a positive side also, and here Wordsworth's well-known lines come to our aid:—

"We live by Admiration, Hope and Love!
And even as those are well and wisely fixed,
In dignity of being we ascend."

Ruskin has made us familiar with the first line of the triplet, but the remaining two are full of guidance and instruction. It takes a poet to discern why it is especially by the performance of these three functions that we live. Admiration, reverent pleasure, delight, praise, adoration, worship; we know how the soul takes wings to herself when she admires and how veritably she scales the heavens when she adores. We know, too, how the provincial attitude of mind, *nil admirari*, paralyses imagination and relaxes effort. We have all cried, "Woe is me that I am constrained to dwell in the tents of Mesech," the Mesech of the commonplace, where people do not think great thoughts or do noble acts, and where beauty is not. Our dull days drag themselves through, but we can hardly be said to *live*; wherefore, all praise to the poet who perceived the vital character of admiration. But Hope—what's the good of Hope! Practical people connect it with castles in Spain and other intangible possessions. If we are to know how far we live by hope, how far it is bread of life to us, we must go where hope is not. Dante understood. He found written upon the gates of Hell: "*Lasciate ogni speranza voi ch'entrate.*" The prisoner who has no hope of release, the man with the mortal sickness, who has no hope of recovery, the family which has had to abandon hope for its dearest, these know, by the loss of hope, that it is by hope we live. Our God is described as "the God of Hope"; and we might get through many a dark day if we realized this,

and that hope is a real if not tangible possession, which, like all the best things, we can ask for and have. Let us try to conceive the possibility of going through a single day without any hope for this life or the next, and a sudden deadness falls upon our spirits, because "we live by hope."

But we live by Love, also, by the love we give and the love we receive, by the countless tendernesses that go out from us and the countless kindnesses that come to us; by the love of our neighbour and the love of our God. As all love implies a giving and a receiving, it is not necessary to divide currents that meet. We do not ask what makes us happy, but we are happy, abounding in life, until some single channel of love and goodwill is obstructed, someone has given us offence or received offence at our hands, and at once life runs low within us. We go languid and devoid of pleasure, we are no longer fully alive, because we live by love; not by a consuming and unreasonable affection for any individual, but by the outgoing of love from us in all directions and the intaking of love from all sources. And this is not a state of violent and excited feeling, but is placid and continuous as the act of breathing: thus we receive into us the love of God, and thus our own hearts go out in answering love. "We live by admiration, hope and love," and without these three we do not live. And what is the consummation? According to Wordsworth, "a gradual ascent in dignity of being." We see it now and then in beautiful old age, serene, wise, sweet, quick to admire, ready to hope against hope, and always to love. But there is an intermediate stage. These three, which are identical with the three of which St. Paul says, "now abideth these three," must be well and wisely fixed; and here is the task set before us who are appointed to bring up the young.

IV.

It is the greatest perplexity of parents and guardians that young people will fix their admiration upon, pin their faith to, unworthy objects, whether these be the companions they go with, the heroes they delight in, the books they read, the amusements they seek. Unworthy or little worthy admirations keep them in a state of excitement which they mistake for life; and the worst of it is we can do nothing. If we depreciate what they admire, they put it down to our niggard and ungenerous nature, and take no heed to our strictures. Our only course is to forestall their fervours about *worthless* things, by occupying the place with that which is *worthy*. We cannot say to a boy, "Thou shalt admire" such and such a comrade, but we can occasionally put a nice boy in his way and say nothing about it: so with books and men; we cannot cause them to

admire, but we can admire ourselves with spontaneous heartiness and simplicity. They begin to wonder why, to admire also, or to find out for themselves a hero or author equally worthy of admiration. Two things we must beware of: we may not talk much about the matter, or the boy will say we "gas"; we may not be obtrusive, but we must be consistent; and we may not allow ourselves in admiration for the second-rate. If he see us sitting down to an unworthy novel, enjoying a second-rate performance, seeking a second-rate person for the sake of his wealth or position, the boy believes that we are tacitly professing a higher standard than we hold; older persons will make allowance and will understand that we do care for the best things, though now and then we content ourselves with the second-best; but children are *exigeant*. "We needs must love the highest when we see it," and our business is to get young people to see the highest in life and letters, in conduct and motive, without boring them. All this sounds more difficult than it is, because children accept the unexpressed standard of their homes. If we give our admiration, our faith, to "whatsoever things are lovely and of good report," if we "think on these things," and not on things unworthy, which we are free to depreciate, we shall be in a fair way to fix "well and wisely" the admiration of the young people.

I have said that *faith* is an interchangeable term for admiration. Faith also implies the fixed regard which leads to *recognition*, and the recognition which leads to appreciation; and when our admiration, our faith, is fixed on the Highest, appreciation becomes worship, adoration. I know I am touching upon a subject about which many parents experience anxiety and diffidence. They believe that the knowledge of God, faith in God, is *the* vital thing, and it is truly that which they are most anxious that their children should possess, but they are shy of speaking about what they have most at heart. I think it would help us if we realized that at no time in their lives are children ignorant of God, that the ground is always prepared for this seed, and that the mother's only care need be to avoid platitudes and hackneyed expressions, and speak with the freshness and fervour of her own convictions. I think we might make more use than we do of the habit of meditation as a means of attaining to the knowledge of God.

If we get some notion as to how to fix the *Admiration* of our young people well and wisely, we are still vague about *Hope*. But it is necessary that we should clear our thoughts, because, perhaps, the great failure of the age we live in is a failure in hope. It is for lack of hope that we do not in patience wait for an end, or with assiduity work for it. It is because of our

failure in hope that we do not build, or plan, or write, for the generations to come. We live for the present, work for the present, and must have immediate returns. We live by hope, says the poet, which means that without hope we do not live; and that there is not life enough for our living is the secret consciousness of everyone. Therefore, we run after change, excitement, amusement, anything that promises to "pass the time." Therefore, our interests are feeble, our aims low. Without hope, too, there is no fear. We may pray with our lips, "Give us an heart to love and *dread* thee," but we do not *dread*, and upon quite slight provocation men take leave of the life that has been lent to them for a purpose. A straw shows which way the current flows, and that a novelist should have conceived the idea of a hotel convenient for "unostentatious suicide" is a distressing symptom of our ailment. No great works are accomplished by a people without hope; and we in England are not performing great works at the present moment, not in art, literature, architecture, legislation, not in any single field of human endeavour. But nations, like persons, have their times of sickness and of health; and because promise rests with the young, it is worth while to enquire into the causes of this deep-seated disease. They are partly physical, no doubt; we are an over-strained nervous generation; but the means we should take to cure ourselves morally would remove our physical disabilities too. We want a tonic of Hope "well and wisely fixed," and we must bring up young people upon this tonic.

Now, it is exceedingly easy for us to gratify all a child's desires immediately and on the spot. It is so easy to compass this little treat and that, to arrange that every day shall have its treat or its new possession, that the children get used to it and grow up with the habit of constant gratification and without any practice of hope. Even the birthday is forestalled a hundred times in the year, and everything comes—not to him who waits, but to him who wants. We can, at any rate, bring up children in hope, see to it that they wait and work for the bicycle, or the book, or the birthday treat, that they have things to look forward to. Let us feed them with tales of high endeavour and great accomplishment, let them share our distress about those things which are as blots upon our national life, nourish them on the hope that they themselves may do something to make England good and great; show that it is always a single person here or there, from time to time, who raises the nation to higher levels and gives the rest of us something to live up to; that the person who helps to make a country great may be a poor girl like Grace Darling, or a peasant like Robert Burns, or a retiring gentleman like Florence Nightingale; or the son of a labouring

man like George Stephenson; that the only conditions required are fitness, preparation and readiness. We all know how Florence Nightingale prepared and trained herself for a career which did not exist until she made it. The young person who knows that there are great chances of serving their country in wait for those who are ready for them, and that his concern is not to seek the chance but simply to be ready when it arises, lives a life of hope and endeavour, and will certainly be a profitable citizen to the community.

There is a reason for our hopelessness deeper-seated than the nervous depression and anxiety which beset us, the present gratifications for which we lay ourselves out, or the personal aims which invalidate our efforts. Without hope, we live at a low level, disturbing ourselves with petty cares, distracting ourselves with petty joys. The difficulty is a very real one. We recite, week by week, that we "believe in the life everlasting," but, in this keenly scientific age, we ask, "What is the life everlasting?" and no answer reaches us. It may be that, in proportion as we make a serious attempt to realise that we are spirits; that knowledge, the knowledge of God, is the ineffable reward set before us; that there is no hint given us of change in place, but only of change of state; that, conceivably, the works we have begun, the interests we have established, the labours for others which we have undertaken, the loves which constrain us—may still be our occupation in the unseen life—it may be that, with such a possibility before us, we shall spend our days with added seriousness and endeavour, and with a great unspeakable Hope.

But, if we would fix such hopes as these well and wisely in the hearts of children, we must think, pray, rectify our own conceptions of life present and to come; so may we arrive at a great Hope for the children and ourselves; and our emergence from the Slough of Despond shall be into a higher life.

We live by Admiration, Hope and Love. Here, surely, all is spontaneous and easy, requiring no effort on our part; and happy is the person, say we, who gets enough love to live upon. But love consists not in getting but in giving, and is distinguished from the tumult of the affections which we commonly so name. Love is, like life, a state, an abiding state, says St. Paul, who has portrayed the divine Charity in such wise that there can never be anything to add whether in conception or practice. If we hope to guide children so that they may well and wisely fix their love, it is necessary that we should give some definite thought to the subject, be clear in our minds as to what we mean by love and how we are to get the power of loving, or rather, to keep it, for we have seen that the little child loves freely. "Now

abideth Faith, Hope, Charity, these three." I venture to think that of the three abiding states, if we have lapsed from faith and hope, we yet abide in love. Our neighbour becomes more precious to us; the more he is distressed and uneasy, the more we care for him and labour for his relief; perhaps, indeed, the passion of philanthropy is the feature by which our age will be known to history. "Write me as one who loves his fellowmen,"—may we figure this poor faulty age of ours as offering in extenuation for many short-comings? Let us be thankful and see to it that the children share in this gift of their age. But, because our philanthropy is not always sanctified or instructed, sentimental humanitarianism becomes our danger. None shall endure hardness, is our decree; none shall suffer; especially none shall suffer for wrong-doing; and we are in arms against the righteous severity of God and man. Let us "think clear," that we may correct this attitude of mind in ourselves and for the children. Let us return to the old paths and perceive that life is disciplinary for us and others; that "God's in His heaven, all's right with the world"; that suffering in the present life is no such mighty thing after all; nor, if we go on with our lives, is it so great a thing to be divested of the flesh. If we ourselves love those things which be lovely, why, love is contagious, and the children will do as we do. But, we must not only love wisely and well; we must *fix* our love. Here, I think, is a caution for us in these days of passing enthusiasms, engrossing fads; and we really can do a great deal towards forming the habit of steadfastness in the young people about us.

We have now considered, however inadequately, the greatness of the child as a person, the liberty that is due to him as a person, some forms of oppression which interfere with his proper liberty (most of which come upon him from within), and the aliment which he is to live by—Admiration, Hope and Love. We have seen that, though we cannot make a child eat, it is our business to put the proper food in his way; and, I think, it must come home to us all that the duty of taking thought, understanding, realising, is that which presses upon us; it is only that which we understand that we can communicate; and what we understand, are really impressed by, we cannot fail to communicate, because it becomes ourselves, manifest in all our speech and action. "Who is sufficient for these things?" we cry with the Apostle; but with him we may add, "I thank my God."

Let me close by repeating again Carlyle's great words: "The mystery of a *Person*, indeed, is ever divine, to him that has a sense of the God-like"; and that wonderful saying of Wordsworth's, which wraps in small compass for our use the secret of how to keep the mystery of a "Person" inviolate:—

"We live by Admiration Hope and Love!"

12p18C MC 443

Printed by Wadsworth & Co., The Rydal Press, Keighley.

Why Small Things Matter

By
HELEN WEBB

M.D. (Lond.)

PRICE SIXPENCE

LONDON:
PARENTS NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL UNION
171 ~~20~~ VICTORIA STREET, S.W.1.
1925

WHY SMALL THINGS MATTER.

EVERYONE must be agreed that we are living in most strenuous times. Must not those of us who are older frequently realise that the calls of to-day on our time and our nerve-power are greatly in excess of what were made upon our parents'? The calmest and best balanced are aware of an environment which makes it harder to concentrate attention, to work steadily; harder to keep our tempers, more difficult to sleep soundly, which in short renders us in every way less placid than were the folk in the time of our grandparents.

Life rushes; it seldom walks or trots quietly. Type-writers, telephones, motor-cars and aeroplanes tend to make people pack their days full to bursting, and many of us find that we are expected, with these aids, to get through as much in a day as former generations did in a week or more.

In such a milieu and with this stress bearing in from all sides, does it not behove us to stop and consider not only how we can put up suitable barriers for self-protection, but in what ways we can safeguard and strengthen the rising generation, so that they may present a comparatively calm front to a world of increasing turmoil, and not go under in the conflict?

It does not seem as if we could do much to lessen the growth of the general stress, but can we not safeguard the organism exposed to it? Can we not help on that adaptation of the race to environment, which in a longer time and in a rougher way is sure to be naturally dealt with by the working of the law of survival of the fittest? May not the members of this Union, whose first object is the improvement of the race, set before their minds an ideal of strong, healthy, wise people, who will sometime inhabit the world, and hope that in spite of all difficulties there may again be gods on the earth in future days?

If the coming of this ideal is to be expedited, we must keep before us the thought that the child is the father of the man, and give the very best possible chance of stability to every human being who is born into the world.

"I doubt," says Max Muller, "whether it is possible to take too high a view of life, where the education of children is concerned. It is the one great work entrusted to us, it forms the true religion of life. Nothing is small or unimportant in forming the next generation, which is to carry on the work where we leave it unfinished. No single soul can be spared—everyone is important, everyone may be the cause of infinite good, or of infinite mischief forever hereafter."

I am not going to say much about heredity, though it is an important subject closely related to the one before us.

A child does well to choose its parents (and still more its stock) wisely, and to bring with it the best of inherited tendencies. Yet the highest authorities on this subject disagree in the very essence of their theories, and we often must gaze with surprise at what look like absolute freaks of heredity. We see the unsatisfactory children not infrequently produced by fine intellectual parents, and capable, useful men and women who take their descent from many a silly and incapable father and mother. This is not because the laws of heredity do not work true, but because they are very, very complicated, and our own ignorance of them is still so great that they are bound to surprise us at every turn. Still, as Dr. Clouston truly points out, the intelligent lay public may be pardoned for applying common sense to the subject, and physicians of large practical experience may be forgiven if they adhere to the generally accepted theory that a bad, ill-nourished mother and a drunken father will produce between them a bad progeny, who in their turn in spite of favourable environment, generally produce a very doubtful stock. From the nutritional point of view heredity certainly tells. "Germ cells require to be nourished like other cells, and the laws which govern their nutrition cannot be different from those which govern the other cells of the body." Many tendencies, too, are known to run in families, and all agree that in a marked degree types of nervous system tend to reproduce themselves. The neurotic is generally the child of neurotic parents, and families who have a history of alcoholism, epilepsy or insanity are not those from which we should choose the parents of the race.

It must be kept in mind (again I quote Dr. Clouston) that hereditary defects act as weakeners of the defences through which mankind resists disease and death. Physiologists and physicians know that we chiefly die, not from disease but because the defences against the innumerable enemies of our lives have become weakened. To over-press or over-educate the brain of a child in whose family insanity or neurasthenia exists may be to diminish its defences and to bring on diseases, which by other modes of education—or absence of it—might have been avoided.

Though our knowledge of the influences of environment is also limited, we may feel pretty certain that, other things being equal, the child who has had the wisest treatment, according to human knowledge, will, in manhood or womanhood, be blessed with more stability than he who, bringing the same heredity with him, is born into less favourable conditions. There are modes of upbringing, of education, and of conduct in life which should be especially avoided where a child is handicapped by a bad heredity. There are special precautions and attentions to physiological law, which would save the minds of many such from passing into inefficiency and actual disease. While heredity implies

a potentiality towards good or evil, it commonly needs a special exciting cause or conjunction of causes to bring out its visible effects. It is a fate which may be averted by knowledge and practical wisdom.

The influence of post-natal environment (our subject) is in all instances incalculably great. That life may be lived bravely and cleanly and the burden of responsibility borne on brave shoulders, the young adult must above all things enter into manhood with a sound and stable nervous system, stable with the stability of true vitality, and sound by association with a pure and healthy body. The good government of a country grows out of the healthy life of the people, and on it again this healthy life depends. In the same manner the nervous system of a man grows strong and well-balanced through the healthy life of his body, and as by it everything else is governed and controlled its condition tells back for good or evil on all the functions of life.

Whatever a human soul may be, and wherever we come from, we all have to meet life through the instrumentality of a brain and nervous system. While we are in the body it is through these that we must manifest ourselves, and on their health and good working must depend the light in which our personality appears to our fellow-men. If they are sound and robust, if they are a well-tuned instrument of delicacy and power, then can the mind and personality show at its best, and the human being will shine among his fellows. If, on the other hand, the brain and nervous system are poor, warped and undeveloped, be the soul behind it what it may, it cannot do itself justice.

Now, the nervous system of a baby at birth is relatively very large and important. The relation of its brain to its body-weight is as one to eight, while in the adult it is as little as one to forty or forty-five. The spinal cord at birth is to the body-weight as one to five hundred; in the adult it is one to one thousand five hundred. In the baby the sense-organs have established connections with the cortex, that all-important layer of grey matter formed essentially of cells and delicately branching filaments, which covers the surface of the whole organ. The paths are laid down, but not yet in full working order. No new nerve units will appear in the sense organs, nor will the cell-bodies of the cortex, with which these are connected, be any further multiplied.

A nerve unit consists of a nerve-cell from which nerve fibres start, to become connected fundamentally with other units. Each is an entity, an individual, which, if destroyed is not replaced. There are regiments of these in the brain, and each one is itself, with its own identity, its phases of fatigue and restoration, ill-health and good-health, doing its work properly or scamping it, every day of our lives. We must not feel that these cells are like those of many simpler organs of the body, which are destroyed in

use and pass away to be succeeded by other generations just like themselves.

Though the connections of the sense organs with the cortex are present at birth, the greater part of the nervous system is still very far from having finished its growth. The brain contains a large amount of quite undeveloped tissue, which gradually spreads out from the developed areas into the surrounding parts, and in regular order the connections of one part with another become developed. As this goes on, the baby's brain doubles its weight in the first year, and at the end of the second year is three times as heavy as at birth. In the first year also it increases its ratio to the body-weight and comes to be 1 to 6, instead of 1 to 8. This rapid growth of the brain (one c.c. per diem during the first year) and the increased complication of its convolutions are the concrete, physical expression of the wonderful unfolding of the human being, which goes on *pari passu* with them and fills with awe, astonishment and reverence all right-thinking people, who are honoured by the acquaintance of a healthy baby.

The relative size of the nervous system in childhood, its immaturity and its quick growth, all explain to the physician much that is important in the nervous diseases of infancy, and ought to be borne in mind by parents and other guardians of childhood. The higher centres, whose business it will be later on to inhibit and control the lower, are not as yet in full working order. Sensitive and excitable nerves connect every part of the body to ignorant and inexperienced centres, and this may lead to imperfect or exaggerated impressions and actions. Furthermore, the control exerted by the higher centres is in infancy very easily exhausted, a characteristic which continues through childhood in a decreasing degree. This is a point of great practical importance, and ought to be fully realised by all who have to do with the ordering of the lives of children.

From a combination of all these reasons, it comes about that in very early life trivial causes may produce profound nervous impressions. For example, what may look like very slight errors of diet, or small excitements, may result in convulsions, which endanger the life of the child, or in temperatures of a quite alarming magnitude. Furthermore, for every child who is killed by such an explosion there are certainly not a few whose nervous systems receive twists and injuries which leave behind them life-long effects. Extreme nervousness of many kinds, disorders of sleep, stammering, epilepsy, and even insanity may have had their origin in malnutrition, early nerve-shocks and other causes often unnoticed at the time. Again, the presence of some physical abnormality, such as adenoids, or eye strain, may, as the child gets older, give rise to a variety of nervous

symptoms, or inhibit brain action to a degree easily realised when removal or relief acts almost like magic upon the intelligence and general health of the child.

All the time the brain is growing, relations are being set up with the outer world, through sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste. It is all the time shaping itself to its surroundings. Nothing transpires near it without consciously or unconsciously making some difference to it. All it comes in contact with affects it for good or evil, directly through the nerves, by the influence on the quality of blood which circulates through it, and everything else in its environment.

Though all young brains are unstable, there are some which are sensitive in a special degree. They belong to the children of the neurotic type, in whom emotional instability is developed beyond the common. In them varieties of nerve explosion occur in response to much slighter stimulation than in the calmer and more phlegmatic. All babies do not have convulsions when they eat something indigestible, or because the poison of an infectious fever has begun to circulate in their blood; but the neurotic infant (who shows often from the first its nervous, emotional temperament) will be especially lucky if it escapes such results.

These individuals, growing up from infancy, through childhood, and adolescence to adult life, stand in special danger, some more and some less, of going down under the stress of modern times. If unfortunate in their environment, not a few find their way to our mental hospitals, whereas, with the right education and surroundings, they develop into some of the most valuable people who walk the earth.

I have, elsewhere, divided neurotics roughly into two classes: (1) those who are naturally "unprotected," and (2) those who are naturally "protected." Dr. Leonard Guthrie makes a division which generally speaking coincides in extent with this, into (1) "the unrestrained emotional type" and (2) "the restrained emotional type." In the first class the power of self-control is deficient and feeble; in the latter it becomes abnormally developed. In the first, the personality of the individual is dangerously open to the influences of the hour; the latter is hard to move and responds more to principles and theories than to the influence of his fellow-creatures. It is obvious that children belonging to the first type most especially call for care in the upbringing, and that to fortify them against the pressure of modern times we must strengthen all the defences.

All infants should have peace and quiet, with short alternations of activity; and food absolutely right in quality and quantity (in most cases, this, at first, should be mother's milk), given at regular intervals, with proper pauses between for digestion.

They need fresh air in abundance, the greatest cleanliness, warmth, without heat or stuffiness, supplied by clothes which give comfort and allow the completest freedom. They should be surrounded by cheerfulness to the level of joy, and quiet watchfulness without fuss. These things will all tend to many hours of unbroken sleep.

And here we come to what is of all things most important, to the efficient building up of a stable system. Those brain cells which I just now begged you to regard with honour and reverence, and upon whose health before anything else will power and stability depend, are *chiefly recuperated during sleep*. During activity their force becomes used up and exhausted. They become clogged with waste products, which make further work impossible until, during sleep, they take up from the blood fresh material and prepare themselves to cope with the demands of the next waking period. Just because in infancy and childhood the brain centres are quickly exhausted, much sleep is needed to ensure their proper working. Of course, food and air to nourish the blood are also important in this connection, but I do not find that it is as necessary to remind people of the latter as of the former.

For five mothers who take pains to feed their children as they ought to be fed, there is not more than one (I am putting the average high) who realizes how essential is sleep. Perhaps, five mothers in six recognise that to quite young babies sleep is important, but this only because the babies themselves, when wakeful, resent the insult to their nervous systems and are therefore apt to disturb the household by their cries.

Ideally speaking, an infant during the first few months should sleep all the time that it is not being washed, dressed or fed. As it grows older, the day sleep should be persevered in as long as possible, and early bed-time should be continued long into the teens.

Everyone knows that children need a larger supply of food in proportion to the body-weight than do adults, because they not only have to keep up condition but have to grow at the same time. So in the case of sleep, more is needed by the young than by the adult, because growth as well as recuperation of nerve is going on, and an extra quantity must be thrown in for the establishment of nervous stability. When people are seriously over-worked or over-worried, one of the first symptoms is generally loss of sleep, or their sleep is of an inferior quality. When by excessive hours of work, or anxiety, any one cuts off his normally needed sleep, the first result on a healthy nervous system is overpowering drowsiness. There are few people who have not at some crisis of life been amazed at the way in which, in spite of trouble and anxiety, they slept. This happens during the time of possible recuperation. If hours of sleep are persistently shortened, the power of recovery grows less and less, and with the majority

of grown-up people mental worry immediately interferes with both its quantity and quality.

As children get beyond infancy the same general principles should be observed; a sufficiency of good, nourishing, but simple food at regular hours, plenty of fresh air and exercise, and when possible life in the country instead of in town.

Do not over-stimulate; do not over-educate; and do not press the brain. See to the removal of all physical disabilities, such as adenoids, enlarged tonsils, errors of refraction in the eyes; defective teeth, etc., in short, anything which may interfere with brain action or nutrition.

There should be plenty of routine and a good deal of what may seem to us grown-up people, absolute monotony in the life of a child. The world is to him all new and interesting; there are quantities of thrilling things to be seen and observed and learnt, which to us may have become so familiar as to be nearly non-existent, unless we have children about us to keep us young. Little children ought not to have a chance of becoming blase; they readily do if given too much artificial excitement, such as late or crowded parties, and cinema entertainments. Excitement which at all partakes of the nature of grown-up excitement is apt to be harmful, and there is plenty of the kind which they need always at hand in every day events.

There should be abundance of occupation and, at first, the more it is of the child's own finding the better. Let us never be in a hurry to supply Paris dolls to such a child as loves and makes an inseparable companion of, perhaps, an old stick with a potato for a head, wrapped up in a discarded garment of its own.

Here imagination and ingenuity are at work, and original, independent action, which should be allowed to exercise themselves and will grow in the using.

One ought to respect the concentration and brown studies of children and not thoughtlessly interrupt serious occupations, the inwardness of which we do not understand. How often a little child, busily engaged in some undertaking, be it a building of bricks or making a mud pie, is suddenly seized upon, bundled up, and hustled off to what the grown-up person is well aware to be the much more important *next thing*. It was not only learning valuable facts of life but practising attention and concentration, and so forming habits such as build grit into character. If the *next thing* is *really* important (a walk, or dinner or something of that kind) give due warning to begin putting up in time, and the child will have another lesson in life, instead of a shock and a jar.

Here we find ourselves in the midst of the question of habit, "That diminutive chain which is scarcely heavy enough to be felt till it is too strong to be broken," as it is described by Dr. Johnson.

Few things tend more to nervous stability in later life than the early formation of good and correct habits in small things.

The human being who in childhood has learnt to do mechanically all the minor details of everyday occurrence, has cleared from his path a mass of obstructive material, and gone far in the work of preparing his brain to endure without injury the worries and burdens of life.

Such mechanicalisation makes thousands of things easy which would otherwise be difficult. When they are habitual they need no attention and do not cause mental fatigue, which is an expensive output. The little child, for instance, who learns what in Devonshire is known as "behaviour" before self-consciousness comes upon him, is saved a multitude of wearing mortifications and difficulties as he grows bigger, and can later enjoy the interests around him instead of undergoing much real distress.

More than this, routine and repetition of actions which go to form habits have a specific steadying effect upon the nervous system. They increase co-ordination, improve its tone, and give poise. It is obvious that too much habit, *the making habitual things which ought to be left to choice and attention*, tends on the other hand to give an excessive degree and a wrong kind of stability, lessens spontaneity and renders the individual unfit to cope with the new conditions which meet him in the calls of life. The man who has gone in one narrow round all his life, simply repeating without thought the same daily routine actions, may become in one sense so stable that nothing moves and nothing interests him. He is a mere machine. He acquires a stability which may be compared to that of a cube on a table. What we aim at, on the other hand, for the healthy brain of a living soul is the balanced stability, of the "loggan-stone," which, moved by the slightest touch, ultimately returns to equilibrium.

Amongst those habits to be cultivated are many negative ones. By this I mean, that those in charge of children should do all in their power to see that habits of mind and body detrimental to health and sanity are *not* formed. As an example of this, take the habit of screaming fits, not at all rare in emotional children. Such fits are terribly exhausting at the time, and are apt to result in more or less permanent weakening of the defences.

Though the permanent injury may be like that of the breaking of Sir Walter Scott's heart, "so well mended that one cannot find the scar," it is there nevertheless. For the young infant a certain amount of use of its lungs is useful and wholesome. It will cry when it is hungry, and from time to time express its disapproval of various experiences which it would prefer left alone. It will cry with pain, and it is well we should know about a pin or a stomach ache. No trouble should be spared to find the cause of such crying, if doubtful, but with its removal and the

consequent relief from annoyance or suffering the baby at once should calm down and become happy again. Not so with the crying fits of the over-emotional infant. They are more like the hysterics of an adult, and tend to repeat and prolong themselves, if timely efforts are not successful in putting a stop to the habit. If taken at the very beginning, change of thought wisely applied at each attempt at recurrence will often be successful, but when once the habit is established the problem becomes much more difficult.

When children waken out of sleep with such screaming it is often the result of some dream, the memory of which goes on terrifying the child, who cannot have the relief of explaining its trouble to those around it.

Closely allied to habit and most influential in the production of good nerve balance are all those muscular actions which necessitate precision. Every action which any group of muscles learns to perform skilfully goes towards the increase of co-ordination in the brain and establishes a healthier state. Physical exercises which are accurately performed and learnt with real attention, not only strengthen the muscles and improve the carriage, cause deep-breathing and consequent increase in the amount of oxygen which enters the blood, but they also cultivate those portions of the brain which are used in their performance and establish the co-ordination of one part with another. Fencing and all exercises of balance and precision have this effect to a particular high degree.

All delicate handicrafts in which interest is awakened, and accuracy sought after, are very effective in increasing co-ordination and balance of brain action.

No child should begin regular lessons very early, much less so the neurotic child. Up to five or six years old, it is, as a rule, much more wholesomely occupied with *things* than with books, and even then great care must be taken that the *mental food supplied is not in excess of the appetite which demands it*. Information will do no harm if it is really sought for and desired, for the mind to develop "needs knowledge as much as the body needs bread and milk."

Close observations of small objects such as is necessitated by attempts to learn to read, to sew, or to thread small beads, have a definitely injurious effect upon the eyes of young children. They modify the vision injuriously and not infrequently set up errors of refraction which continue through life. It may be long before these defects are found out and remedied by proper glasses, and in the meantime they are telling back injuriously on the general health of the child, and putting him at a disadvantage among his fellows. The anxiety of mere babies to learn is a desire best satisfied by reading to them and telling them stories

and facts of interest which gratify the mental appetite and enlarge the child's horizon without doing it physical injury.

Training with young children should for the most part take the place of teaching and in forming all the good habits to which I have referred they will of necessity receive many new ideas. It is delightful to learn to help nurse or mother in all kinds of little ways which teach deftness and tidiness, and one thousand other useful habits. To put away one's toys nicely, fetch and carry, and give messages accurately all form the most valuable kind of education at this time of life.

Everything round him is entering into every fibre of a child, and each day he adds to his knowledge of the common things of the world. What a multitude they are, and what a full life he lives as he realises them in those early years! As Walter Whitman puts it:—

“There was a child went forth every day,
And the first object he looked upon,
That object he became,
And that object became part of him for the day,
Or a certain part of the day,
On for many years, or stretching cycles of years.”

The higher functions of the emotional child ought to be retarded rather than stimulated. Ultimately, they will be all the stronger and healthier for such treatment. No parent ought to be beguiled by the early quickness of the unprotected, excitable child into letting him be pressed forward or even allowed to work up to his apparent powers. Especially, if the heredity is bad, this very precocity may even be a danger signal.

Of the highest moment, in establishing a right rhythm of life, are the moral, social and religious surroundings to which the individual is subjected. First of these as to time, and perhaps also in importance, come the parents themselves, their relations towards each other, their religious outlook, and the general tone of the home. In the earlier part of this paper, I quoted the saying that children should be careful in the choice of their parents. May I now say that the parents should be very careful in their choice of each other.

The more neurotic they are, the more careful should this choice be. One dwells on this because peace in the home and loyalty of one parent to the other, in every department of life, as well as in direct relation to their children, is an element of the atmosphere which cannot be over-estimated. The absence of what someone has called the *psychological unit* in the relation of father and mother is among the most disastrous calamities which can befall a young family. It is best that the parents should in all things see eye to eye, but for them not to be quite

loyal to each other and not each uphold the authority of the other is a nervous strain which falls with intolerable weight on sensitive and emotional children. We often say that the first principle in the inculcation of obedience is that children should feel that we ourselves are obedient to a higher law. In the same way they become loyal by recognising loyalty between those dear to them. If the father and mother have to settle some question on which they cannot at first agree, let the understanding become to behind closed doors and not in the presence of the children. The young and emotional need round them the peaceful atmosphere which this ensures.

In a charming book, probably known to some here, “The Young People by one of the Old People,” the question is touched upon most delicately. “Father and Mother work for love of the young people, and the young people watch and share the work, and lighten it and give it the touch of comedy. They are delightful. ‘I wish,’ said one of them, ‘that we had a little more I don’t mean much more. I don’t want to alter the way we are doing things now. I know mother is awfully good—you know you are, mother—and father is awfully clever—of course you are, father—I only mean we could do such a lot of awfully jolly things, I don’t mean only for ourselves!’” But it was the way she said it, with a laugh and a nod to me, and a hand given to father, and a hand given to mother. She made us all sure we had all we wanted. She had seen that father was in one of his moods, and in immediate need of that assurance, and the young people are wonderfully loyal to father. This loyalty which is a good instance of the divine management of human affairs, is hard to define. It is neither pride nor instinct, nor a sense of duty, nor ignorance of the facts of the case, nor a natural desire to make the best of them. I can only say that it would not be there if father and mother did not deserve it should be there. They get it to grow and flower and be in flower like the gorse all the year round. Out of the nettles of criticism they pluck the flower of loyalty. I think well of the nettles and not ill, and would not have them away. The young person who never judges his or her parents will always be misjudging them; and if I were in want of children of my own, I would as soon adopt a gramophone as such a child. This home-grown flower, the young people’s loyalty, which we used to call filial piety, is very fastidious in its choice of soil, and very sensitive to changes in the atmosphere of home. I have observed it closed and drooping in the afternoon, because father at lunch-time had said to mother, “I wish to goodness you would not do that!” but by dinner-time it was as fresh as ever, and father gathered some which mother wore all the evening.”

Whatever be the creed of the parents, it is good for the children that, while firmly and reverently held, it is imbued with

a wide tolerance for the views of others. How many young people have met with moral shipwreck simply as the result of a too narrow and rigid atmosphere in the home, which drove them to the other extreme. Religious instruction should be given reverently in peaceful surroundings, not hurried through or conducted at a time subject to interruption.

It is well that the children should associate this teaching with moments of confidence, when they can open their hearts quietly to their mother and have an opportunity for discussing with her problems and difficulties of any kind which happen to be engaging their attention.

The making of friends (one of the most momentous influences of life) is an especially serious matter in the case of young people of the un-restrained emotional type. For this reason it behoves parents to exercise all possible care as to with whom their children associate.

It is generally impossible to choose the individual friends, for the growth of real friendship is a personal matter—a kind of fate which comes to each human soul and depends on lines of character and attraction which no outsider can judge—and in this sense, a father or mother is an outsider.

Parents, however, can by the choice of schools, and of the families with whom they associate do much to see that their children are brought into contact, for the most part, with those who are worthy of choice. They can spread the table, though each child for himself must select his individual food. Indeed, by the time the chief friendships of life, to say nothing of closer bonds, come to be made, character is so formed and the lines of cleavage in the individuality so established that our children have passed beyond the region to which this paper chiefly refers.

There is literally no end to this subject, from any side, be it fact, theory for speculation, and I have only touched on a very few points.

Parents' National Educational Union.

(Founded 1888. Incorporated 1921).

Central Office: VICTORIA STREET, WESTMINSTER, S.W.1.

Among the books and pamphlets for sale at the office are the following:—

Home Education Series by Miss C. M. Mason:—

- (i.) "Home Education," 5/6, post free, 5/6.
- (ii.) "Parents and Children," 5/-, post free, 5/6.
- (iii.) "School Education," 5/-, post free, 5/6.
- (iv.) "Ourselves, our Souls and Bodies," 7/6, post free, 8/-.
- (v.) "Some Studies in the Formation of Character," 8/-, post free, 8/6.
- "The Parents' Review" (the monthly organ of the Union), price 10/6, annually; single copies, post free, 6d. Specimen copies can be obtained free of charge.
- "The British Museum for Children," by Frances Epps. Price 3/6, postage 6d.
- "British Museum Note Book" (Book of Centuries). Price 2/8, postage 6d.
- Catalogue of the Library. Price 6d., post free.
- "Catalogue of Children's Gift Books," by Mrs. Clement Parsons. Price 6d. post free.
- Nature Note Books, in linen covers, plain or interleaved. Price 2/3, postage 6d.
- "Early Manhood," by Rt. Hon. The Earl of Lytton. Price 3d., post free.
- "Parents and Lessons," by Mrs. Clement Parsons. Price 4/-, post free.
- "The Home Training of Children," by the Hon. Mrs. Franklin, Hon. Secretary of the P.N.E.U. Price 3d., post free.
- "Thought Training as a Factor in the Training of Character and Talk to Nurses," by Helen Webb, M.B. Price 6d., post free.
- "The Education of Citizens," by the Rev. W. Temple. Price 4d., post free.
- "Parents and Nervous Children," by J. Odery Symes, M.D. Price 4d., post free.
- "Two articles in the Equipment of Boys and Girls: Opinions and Principles," by Miss C. M. Mason. Price 6d., post free.
- "Citizenship," by Miss Fauce, price 6d., post free.
- "Teaching Methods of Miss Mason," by H. W. Houshold. Price 4d., post free.
- "Children as Parsons," by Miss C. M. Mason. Price 1/-, post free.
- "The Basis of National Strength," by Miss C. M. Mason. Price 6d., post free.
- "Moral Education," by the Hon. Mrs. Franklin. Price 3d., post free.
- "A Liberal Education: Theory," by Miss C. M. Mason. Price 2d., post free.
- "A Liberal Education: Practice," by Miss Barry. Price 3d., post free.
- "The Scope of Continuation Schools," by Miss C. M. Mason. Price 6d., post free.
- "A Liberal Education in Secondary Schools," by Miss C. M. Mason. Price 6d., post free.
- "English Literature and the Teaching Methods of Miss Mason," by H. W. Houshold, M.A. Price 4d., post free.
- "A Liberal Education for All," by Miss C. M. Mason.
- "Why Small Things Matter," by Mr. Henry Webb. Price 6d., post free.
- "Work and Aims of the Parents' Union School," by Miss O'Connell. Price 6d., post free.
- "The Teaching of Scripture in the Parents' Union School," by Miss R.A. Pennington. Price 3d.
- "Parents' Union School Scripture Programme." Price 3/- a year.

CHILDREN ARE BORN PERSONS

LIBERTY
VERSUS
VARIOUS FORMS OF TYRANNY

BY
CHARLOTTE M. MASON

[REPRINTED FROM "THE PARENTS' REVIEW,"]

PRICE 1/-

PARENTS' NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL UNION
25, VICTORIA STREET, S.W.1

1905.

CHILDREN ARE BORN PERSONS.

LIBERTY VERSUS VARIOUS FORMS OF TYRANNY

"The mystery of a *person*, indeed, is ever divine, to him that has a sense for the godlike."—CARLYLE.

"We live by admiration, hope and love!
And even as these are well and wisely fixed,
In dignity of being we ascend."—WORDSWORTH.

MANY of us were surprised to read years ago of the discoveries made on the site of the first capital of Assyria. Layard had long ago made us familiar with temples and palaces; but we hardly expected to learn that every house, even the smallest, appears to have contained a bath. In like manner, we are astonished to read of the great irrigation works accomplished by the people of Mexico before Cortes introduced them to our eastern world. To-day, we are surprised to find that the literature and art of ancient China are things to be taken seriously. It is worth while to consider why this sort of naïve surprise awakes in us when we hear of a nation that has not come under the influence of western civilisation competing with us on our own lines. The reason is, perhaps, that we regard a person as a product, and have a sort of unconscious formula, something like this: Given such and such conditions of civilisation and education, and we shall have such and such a result, with variations. When we find the result without the conditions we presuppose, why, then we are surprised! We do not realise what Carlyle calls "the mystery of a person," and therefore, we do not see that the possibility of high intellectual attainments, amazing mechanical works, rests with the persons of any nation. Wherefore, we need not be surprised at the achievements of nations in the far past, or in remote countries which have not had what we consider our great advantages. This doctrine, of the mystery of a person, is very wholesome and necessary for us in these days: if we even attempted to realise it, we should not blunder as we do in our efforts at social reform, at education, at international relations. Pope's hackneyed line would come to us with new force, and it would be a mere matter of course that—

"the proper study of mankind is man."

The mystery of a person is indeed divine; and the extraordinary fascination of history lies in this, that this divine mystery continually surprises us in unexpected places. Like Jacob, we cry, before the sympathy of the savage, the courtesy of the boor,

"Behold, God is in this place and I knew it not." We attempt to define a person, the most commonplace person we know, but he will not submit to bounds; some unexpected beauty of nature breaks out; we find he is not what we thought, and begin to suspect that every person exceeds our power of measurement.

We believe that the first article of our P.N.E.U. educational creed—"children are born persons"—is of a revolutionary character; for what is a revolution but a complete reversal of attitude? And by the time, say, in another decade or two, that we have taken in this single idea, we shall find that we have turned round, reversed our attitude towards children not only in a few particulars, but completely.

Wordsworth had glimmerings of the truth: poets mean, not less, but a great deal more than they say; and when the poet says, "Thou best philosopher," "Thou eye among the blind," "Haunted for ever by the eternal mind," "Prophet, Seer blest," and so on—phrases that we all know by heart, but how many of us realise?—we may rest assured that he is not using poetical verbiage, but is making what was in his eyes a vain endeavour to express the immensity of a person, and the greater immensity of the little child, not any of whose vast estate is as yet mortgaged, but all of it is there for his advantage and his profit, with no inimical Chancellor of the Exchequer to levy taxes and require returns. But perhaps this latter statement is not so certain; perhaps the land tax on the Child's Estate is really inevitable, and it rests with us parents and elders to investigate the property and furnish the returns.

Wordsworth did not search an unexplored field when he discovered the child. Thomas Traherne, a much earlier poet, whose works, as we know, have only recently been brought to light, is, I think, more convincing than he; because, though we cannot look back upon our child-selves as seers and prophets and philosophers, we can remember quite well the time when all children were to us "golden boys and girls"; when there was a glamour over trees and houses, men and women; when stars and clouds and birds were not only delights, but possessions; when every effort of strength or skill, the throwing of a stone or the wielding of a brush, was a delight to behold and attempt; when our hearts and arms were stretched out to all the world, and loving and smiling seemed to us the natural behaviour of everybody. As for possessions, what a joy was a pebble or a cork, or a bit of coloured glass, a marble or a bit of string! The glamour of its first invention lay upon everything we saw and touched. God and the angels, men and women, boys and girls, the earth and the sky, all belonged to us with an ineffable sense of possession. If we doubt all this, even

though a glimmering conviction comes to us in the pauses of our thought, why, it requires very little interpretative power to see it in the serenity and superiority of any normal baby child.

"How like an angel I came down!

How bright are all things here!

When first among his works I did appear,

Oh how their Glory me did crown!

The world resembled His Eternity

In which my soul did walk;

And everything that I did see

Did with me talk.

"The skies in their magnificence,

The lively, lovely air;

Oh how divine, how soft, how sweet, how fair!

The stars did entertain my sense,

And all the works of God, so bright and pure,

So rich and great did seem,

As if they ever must endure

In my esteem.

"The streets were paved with golden stones,

The boys and girls were mine,

Oh how did all their lovely faces shine!

The sons of men were holy ones.

In joy and beauty they appeared to me,

And everything which here I found,

Which like an angel I did see,

Adorned the ground."—TRAHERNE.

We all remember the divine warning, "See that ye despise not one of these little ones"; but the words convey little definite meaning to us. What we call "science" is too much with us. We must either reverence or despise children; and while we regard them as incomplete and undeveloped beings who will one day arrive at the completeness of man, rather than as weak and ignorant *persons*, whose ignorance we must inform and whose weakness we must support, but whose potentialities are as great as our own, we cannot do otherwise than despise children, however kindly or even tenderly we commit the offence.

As soon as he gets words with which to communicate with us, a child lets us know that he thinks with surprising clearness and directness, that he sees with a closeness of observation that we have long ago lost, that he enjoys and that he sorrows with an intensity that we have long ceased to experience, that he loves with an *abandon* and a confidence, which, alas, we do not share, that he imagines with a fecundity no artist among us can approach, that he acquires intellectual knowledge and mechanical skill at a rate so amazing that, could the infant's rate of progress be kept

up to manhood, he would surely appropriate the whole field of knowledge in a single lifetime.

Do we ask for confirmation of what may seem to some of us an absurdly exaggerated statement of a child's powers and progress? Consider: in two or three years, he learns to speak a language—perhaps two—idiomatically and correctly, and often with a surprising literary fitness in the use of words. He accustoms himself to an unexplored region, and learns to distinguish between far and near, the flat and the round, hot and cold, hard and soft, and fifty other properties belonging to matter new to his experience. He learns to recognise innumerable objects by their colour, form, consistency, by what signs, indeed, we know not. As for the mechanical skill he acquires, what is the most cultivated singing as compared with articulation and the management of the speaking voice? What are skating and ski-ing compared with the monstrously difficult art of balancing one's body, planting one's feet and directing one's legs in the art of walking? But how soon it is acquired and the unsteady walk becomes an easy run! As for his power of loving, any mother can tell us how her baby loves her long before he is able to say her name, how he hangs upon her eye, basks in her smile, and dances in the joy of her presence. These are things everybody knows; and for that very reason, nobody realises the wonder of this rapid progress in the art of living, nor augurs from it that a child, even an infant child, is no contemptible person judged by any of the standards we apply to his elders. He can accomplish more than any of us could in a given time, and, supposing we could start fair with him in the arts he practices, he would be a long way ahead of us by the end of his second year. I am considering a child as he is, and am not tracing him either, with Wordsworth, to the heights above, or, with the evolutionist, to the depths below; because a person is a *mystery*; that is, we cannot explain him or account for him, but must accept him as he is.

Of course we must, say you; What else does the world do but accept a child as a matter of course? And it is only the faddists who trouble themselves with his origins. But are we not going too fast? Do we really accept children as persons, differentiated from men and women by their weaknesses, which we must cherish and support; by their immeasurable ignorances, which we must instruct; and by that beautiful indefinite thing which we call the innocence of children and suppose in a vague way to be freedom from the evil ways of grown-up people. But children are greedy, passionate, cruel, deceitful, in many ways more open to blame than their elders; and, for all that, they are innocent. To cherish in them that quality which we call innocence, and Christ describes as the *humility* of little children, is perhaps the most difficult and

important task set before us. If we would keep a child innocent, we must deliver him from the oppression of various forms of tyranny.

II

If we ask ourselves, "What is the most inalienable and sacred right of a person *quâ* person?" I suppose the answer is, liberty. Children are persons; *ergo*, children must have liberty. Parents have suspected as much for a generation or two, and have been at pains not "to interfere" with their children; but our loose habits of thinking come in our way, and in the very act of giving their freedom to children we impose fetters which will keep them enslaved all their lives. That is because we confound liberty with license and do not perceive that the two cannot co-exist. We all know that the anarchist, the man who claims to live without rule, to be a law unto himself, is in reality the slave to certain illogical *formulae*, which he holds as binding upon him as laws of life and death. In like manner, the mother does not always perceive that, when she gives her child *leave* to do things forbidden, to sit up half an hour beyond his bed-time, not to do geography or Latin with his governess because he hates that subject, to have a second or third helping because he likes the pudding, she is taking from the child the wide liberty of impersonal law and imposing upon him her own ordering, which is, in the last resort, the *child's* will. It is he who is bending his mother as that proverbial twig is bent, and he is not at all deluded by the oracular "we'll see," with which the mother tries to cover her retreat. The child who has learnt that, by persistent demands, he can get leave to do what he will, and have what he likes, whether he get leave by means of stormy outcries or by his bewitching, wheedling ways, becomes the most pitiable of all slaves, the slave to chance desires; he will live to say with the poet:

"Me this unchartered freedom tires;
I feel the weight of chance desires."

Indeed, he already feels this weight, and that is why he is fretful and discontented and finds so little that is delightful in his life. Then, "Would you restrict a child at all points?" say you; "must we be like that mother in *Punch*, 'Go and see what Tommy is doing and tell him he mustn't.' Or must he be like the schoolboy who gets possible marks for ten virtues, such as orderliness, punctuality, obedience, politeness, and so on, and carries off a distinction when he loses none of these marks?" Such a system would do away with the freedom of home, and, what is more, the child who has been brought up on "do" and "don't," or upon the "marks"

which stand for these, is laying no foundation of solid principles upon which to erect his life. Let him learn that "Do as you're bid" is a child's first duty; that the life of his home is organised on a few such injunctions as "Be true," "Be kind," "Be courteous," "Be punctual," and that to fail in any of these respects is unworthy and unbecoming; more, let him be assured that such failures are of the nature of sin and are displeasing to God, and he will grow up to find pleasure in obedience, and will gradually gather those principles which should guide his life.

But the first duty of the parent is to teach children the meaning of *must*; and the reason why some parents fail to obtain prompt and cheerful obedience from their children is that they do not recognise "must" in their own lives. They *elect* to do this and that, *choose* to go here and there, have kindly instincts and benevolent emotions, but are unaware of the constraining *must* which should direct their speech and control their actions. They allow themselves to do what they choose; there may be little harm in what they do; the harm is that they feel free to allow themselves.

Now, the parent who is not aware that he is living in a law-ordered world, that he has to eat "the fruit of his thoughts" as well as that of his words and actions, is unable to get obedience from his child. He believes that it rests with him to say what the child *may* do or leave undone; and as he does not claim papal infallibility, his children find out soon enough that the ordering of their lives is in their own hands, and that a little persistence will get them "leave" to do what is good in their own eyes. People discuss the value of corporal punishment and think they see in it the way to get obedient children. It may be so, because obedience must be learned in the first three or four years of life, when the smart of a little slap arrests the child's attention, brings tears, and changes his thoughts. As a matter of fact, it is hardly possible to punish some children unless while they are quite young, because the pleasure of displaying bravado under the excitement of the punishment occupies the child's attention to the exclusion of the fault for which he is punished. But the whole discussion is outside the question. The parent, the mother especially, who holds that her children's rule of life must be, "Children, obey your parents, for it is *right*," certainly secures obedience, as she secures personal cleanliness, or proper habits at table, because she has a strong sense of the importance of these things. As her reward, she gains for her child the liberty of a free man, who is not under bondage to his own wilfulness nor the victim of his own chance desires.

The liberty of the person who can make himself do what he ought is the first of the rights that children claim as *persons*. The next article in the child's Bill of Rights is that liberty which we

call innocence, and which we find described in the Gospels as humility. When we come to think of it, we do not see how a little child is humble; he is neither proud nor humble, we say; he does not think of himself at all; we have hit unconsciously upon the solution of the problem. Humility, that childish quality which is so infinitely attractive, consists just in not thinking of oneself at all. This is how children come, and how in some homes they grow up; but do we do nothing to make them self-conscious: do we never admire pretty curls, or pretty frocks? Do we never even *look* our admiration at the lovely creatures, who read us intuitively before they can speak? Poor little souls, it is sad how soon they may be made to lose the beauty of their primal state, and learn to manifest the vulgarity of display. I wonder would it not help us in this matter to copy the pretty custom taught to some continental children? The little girl who kisses the hand of an elder lady, with a pretty curtsy, is put into the attitude proper for a child; that is, she is paying attention and not receiving it. The lady-visitor, too, is taught her place; we do not lavish loud admiration on children at the moment when they are showing deference to us; but this is a detail. The principle is, I think, that an individual fall of man takes place when a child becomes aware of himself; listens as if he were not heeding to his mother's tales of his smartness or goodness, and watches for the next chance when he may display himself. The children hardly deserve to be blamed at all. The man who lights on a nugget has nothing like so exciting a surprise as has the child who becomes aware of himself. The moment when he says to himself, "It is I," is a great one for him, and he exhibits his discovery whenever he gets a chance; that is, he repeats the little performance which has excited his mother's admiration, and invents new ways of showing off. Presently, his self-consciousness takes the form of shyness, and we school him diligently—"What will Mrs. So-and-So think of a boy who does not look her in the face?" or "What do you think?" General Jones says that Bob is learning to hold himself like a man." And Bob struts about with great dignity. Then we seek occasions of display for the children, the dance, the children's party, the little play in which they act, all harmless and wholesome, if it were not for the comments of the grown-ups and the admiration conveyed by loving eyes. By-and-by, comes the *mauvaise honte* of adolescence. "Certainly, the boys and girls are not conceited now," we say; and indeed, poor young things, they are simply consumed with self-consciousness; are aware of their hands and feet, their shoulders and their hair, and cannot forget themselves for a moment in any society but that of everyday. Our system of education fosters self-consciousness. We are proud that our boy distinguishes himself; but it would be well for the

young scholar if the winning of distinctions for *himself* were not put before him as a definite object. But, "where's the harm after all?" we ask; "this sort of self-consciousness is a venial fault and almost universal amongst the young." We can only see the seriousness of this failing from two points of view—that of Him who has said, "It is not the will of the Father that one of these little ones should perish"; and that, I take it, means that it is not the divine will that children should lose their distinctive quality, innocence, or humility, or what we sometimes call simplicity of character. We know there are people who do not lose it, who remain simple and direct in thought, and young in heart, throughout life; but we let ourselves off easily and say, "Ah, yes, these are happily constituted people, who do not seem to feel the anxieties of life." The fact is, these take their times as they come, without undue self-occupation. To approach the question from a second point of view, the havoc wrought on nerves is largely due to this self-consciousness, more often distressing than pleasing, and the fertile cause of depression, morbidity, melancholia, the whole wretched train, which make shipwreck of many a promising life. Our work in securing children freedom from the tyranny of self-consciousness must be positive as well as negative; it is not enough that we abstain from look or word likely to turn a child's thoughts upon himself, but we must make him master of his inheritance and give him many delightful things to think of: "*la terre appartient à l'enfant, toujours à l'enfant*," said Maxim Gorki at an Educational Congress held in Brussels before the war. So it does; the earth beneath and heaven above; and, what is more, as the bird has wings to cleave the air with, so has the child all the powers necessary wherewith to realise and appropriate all knowledge, all beauty, and all goodness. Find out ways to give him all his rights, and he (and more especially *she*) will not allow himself to be troubled with himself. Whoever heard of a morbid naturalist or a historian who (save for physical causes) suffered from melancholia? There is a great deliverance to be wrought in this direction, and sentry duty falls heavily on the soldier engaged in this war.

The tyranny of self crops up in another place. The self-conscious child is very likely generous, and the selfish child is not noticeably self-conscious. He is under the tyranny of a natural desire—acquisitiveness, the desire of possession, covetousness, avarice—and he is quite indifferent and callous to the desires and claims of other people. But I need not say much about a tyranny which every mother finds ways to hold in check; only this we must bear in mind: there is never a time in a child's life when his selfishness does not matter. We are indebted to the novelist who has produced for us that fascinating baby, "Beppino," and has shown how the

pretty, selfish, wilfulness of the child develops into the vicious callousness of the man.* Selfishness is a tyranny hard to escape from; but some knowledge of human nature, of the fact that the child has, naturally, other desires than those that tend to self-gratification—that he loves to be loved, for example, and that he loves to know, that he loves to serve, and loves to give—will help his parents to restore the balance of his qualities and deliver the child from becoming the slave of his own selfishness. Shame and loss and deprivation should do something where more generous motives fail; and, more powerful than these, is a strong practical faith that the selfish child need not become, and is not intended to become, a selfish man or woman.

Another liberty we must vindicate for children is freedom of thought. I do not mean that a youth should grow up like the young Shelley, chafing against the bondage of religion and law, but, rather, that, supposing all his world were "freethinkers," he should still have freedom of mind, liberty of thought, to reject the popular unbelief. Public opinion is, in fact, an insufferable bondage, depriving the person of his individual right to think for himself. This is a right which should be safeguarded for every child, because his mind is his glorious possession; and a mind that does not think, and think its own thoughts, is as a paralysed arm or a blind eye. "But," we say, "young people run away with such wild notions: it is really necessary to teach them what to think about men and movements, books and art, about the questions of the day." To teach them what to think is an easy rôle, easy for them and easy for us; and that is how we get stereotyped classes instead of individual persons, and how we and the children fail to perform the most important function of life—the function of right thinking. We exaggerate the importance of right doing, which may be merely mimetic, but the importance of thinking, and right thinking, cannot be overstated. To secure that a child shall think, we need not exercise ourselves in setting him conundrums: thinking is like digestion, a natural operation for healthy organs. Our real concern is that children should have a good and regular supply of mind-stuff to think upon; that they should have large converse with books as well as with things; that they should become intimate with great men through the books and works of art they have left us, the best part of themselves. Thought breeds thought. Children familiar with great thoughts take as naturally to thinking for themselves as the well-nourished body takes to growing; and we must bear in mind that *growth*, intellectual, moral, spiritual, is the sole end of education. Children, who have been made free of the Republic of Letters, are not carried

* *Joseph Vance*, by William de Morgan.

away by *le dernier cri*; are not, in fact, the slaves of other people's opinions, but do their fair share of that thinking which is their due service to the State.

The last tyranny that we can consider is that of superstition. We have a notion that education delivers men from this bondage; but superstition is a subtle foe and retreats from one fortress only to ensconce himself in another. We do not lay claim to higher culture than the Greeks or even the Romans possessed; indeed, various nations of antiquity could give us points, highly cultivated as we think ourselves; but it is a curious fact that no nation whose records we possess has been able to deliver itself by literature or art, or highest cultivation, from the hideous bondage of superstition. The tragedies of Æschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, have all of them a single appalling theme, the arbitrary and reckless play of the gods upon human fortunes. Indeed, it has been well said that tragedy in a Christian age is impossible, because the hopelessness of any situation implies the ill-will of the gods; and it is cited in this connection that of Shakespeare's three great tragedies two are laid in pre-Christian times, and the third is brought about by a non-Christian person. This consideration throws an interesting light upon the whole subject of superstition. We do not impugn the gods any longer, but we say hard things of fate, destiny, and the like. Napoleon III is far from being the only "man of destiny." We consult crystals, hold séances, have lucky and unlucky days, read our fortunes in our palms; even astrology is practised among us; and we believe ourselves to be half in play and hardly perceive the hold that superstition is gaining upon us. The fact would seem to be that a human being is so made that he must have *religion* or a *substitute*; and that substitute, whatever form it take, is superstition, whose power to degrade and handicap a life cannot be estimated. If we would not have our children open to terrors which are very awful to the young, our resource is to give them the knowledge of God, and "the truth shall make them free." It is necessary to make children know themselves for spirits, that they may realise how easy and necessary is the access of the Divine Spirit to their spirits; how an intimate Friend is with them, unseen, all through their days; how the Almighty is about them to cherish and protect; how the powers of darkness cannot approach them, safe in the keeping of their "Almighty Lover."

We have considered several types of tyranny, none of which are external to the person, but all act within the bounds of his own personality, for

"The mind is its own place and in itself
Can make a hell of heaven, a heaven of hell";
the heaven being, I suppose, when the man is at peace with himself

and when his powers are freely and wisely exercised; the hell when the person is under no interior government and his powers are allowed to run to anarchy and confusion. Parents and children may aid and abet either state of things, so much so, that if a child's place is a well-ordered heaven, he has his parents to thank for his happy state; and, if he is condemned to a "hell" of unrest and fiery desires and resentments, are his parents without blame?

III

So far, we have considered the negative attitude of parents and those *in loco parentis*; but there is a positive side also, and here Wordsworth's well-known lines come to our aid:

"We live by Admiration, Hope and Love!
And even as those are well and wisely fixed,
In dignity of being we ascend."

Ruskin has made us familiar with the first line of the triplet, but the remaining two are full of guidance and instruction. It takes a poet to discern why it is especially by the performance of these three functions that we live. Admiration, reverent pleasure, delight, praise, adoration, worship: we know how the soul takes wings to herself when she admires and how veritably she scales the heavens when she adores. We know, too, how the provincial attitude of mind, *nil admirari*, paralyses imagination and relaxes effort. We have all cried, "Woe is me that I am constrained to dwell in the tents of Mesech," the Mesech of the commonplace, where people do not think great thoughts or do noble acts, and where beauty is not. Our dull days drag themselves through, but we can hardly be said to *live*; wherefore, all praise to the poet who perceived the vital character of admiration. But Hope—what's the good of Hope! Practical people connect it with castles in Spain and other intangible possessions. If we are to know how far we live by hope, how far it is bread of life to us, we must go where hope is not. Dante understood. He found written upon the gates of Hell: "*Lasciate ogni speranza voi ch'entrate.*" The prisoner who has no hope of release; the man with the mortal sickness, who has no hope of recovery; the family which has had to abandon hope for its dearest: these know, by the loss of hope, that it is by hope we live. Our God is described as "the God of Hope"; and we might get through many a dark day if we realised this, and that hope is a real, if not tangible, possession, which, like all the best things, we can ask for and have. Let us try to conceive the possibility of going through a single day without

any hope for this life or the next, and a sudden deadness falls upon our spirits, because "we live by hope."

But we live by Love, also; by the love we give and the love we receive; by the countless tendernesses that go out from us and the countless kindnesses that come to us; by the love of our neighbour and the love of our God. As all love implies a giving and a receiving, it is not necessary to divide currents that meet. We do not ask what makes us happy, but we are happy, abounding in life, until some single channel of love and goodwill is obstructed, someone has given us offence or received offence at our hands, and at once life runs low within us. We go languid and devoid of pleasure; we are no longer fully alive, because we live by love; not by a consuming and unreasonable affection for any individual, but by the outgoing of love from us in all directions and the intaking of love from all sources. And this is not a state of violent and excited feeling, but is placid and continuous as the act of breathing: thus we receive into us the love of God, and thus our own hearts go out in answering love. "We live by admiration, hope and love," and without these three we do not live. And what is the consummation? According to Wordsworth, "a gradual ascent in dignity of being." We see it now and then in beautiful old age, serene, wise, sweet, quick to admire, ready to hope against hope, and always to love. But there is an intermediate stage. These three, which are identical with the three of which St. Paul says, "now abideth these three," must be well and wisely fixed; and here is the task set before us who are appointed to bring up the young.

IV

It is the greatest perplexity of parents and guardians that young people *will* fix their admiration upon, pin their faith to, unworthy objects, whether these be the companions they go with, the heroes they delight in, the books they read, the amusements they seek. Unworthy or little worthy admirations keep them in a state of excitement which they mistake for life; and the worst of it is we can do nothing. If we depreciate what they admire, they put it down to our niggard and ungenerous nature, and take no heed to our strictures. Our only course is to forestall their fervours about *worthless* things, by occupying the place with that which is *worthy*. We cannot say to a boy, "Thou shalt admire" such and such a comrade, but we can occasionally put a nice boy in his way and say nothing about it: so with books and men; we cannot cause them to admire, but we can admire ourselves with spontaneous heartiness and simplicity. They begin to wonder why, to admire also, or to find out for themselves a hero or author equally worthy

of admiration. Two things we must beware of: we may not talk much about the matter, or the boy will say we "gas"; we may not be obtrusive, but we must be consistent; and we may not allow ourselves in admiration for the second-rate. If he see us sitting down to an unworthy novel, enjoying a second-rate performance, seeking a second-rate person for the sake of his wealth or position, the boy believes that we are tacitly professing a higher standard than we hold. Older persons will make allowance and will understand that we do care for the best things, though now and then we content ourselves with the second-best; but children are *exigeant*. "We needs must love the highest when we see it," and our business is to get young people to see the highest in life and letters, in conduct and motive, without boring them. All this sounds more difficult than it is, because children accept the unexpressed standard of their homes. If we give our admiration, our faith, to "whatsoever things are lovely and of good report," if we "think on these things," and not on things unworthy, which we are free to depreciate, we shall be in a fair way to fix "well and wisely" the admiration of the young people.

I have said that *faith* is an interchangeable term for admiration. Faith also implies the fixed regard which leads to *recognition*, and the recognition which leads to appreciation; and when our admiration, our faith, is fixed on the Highest, appreciation becomes worship, adoration. I know I am touching upon a subject about which many parents experience anxiety and diffidence. They believe that the knowledge of God, faith in God, is *the* vital thing, and it is truly that which they are most anxious that their children should possess, but they are shy of speaking about what they have most at heart. I think it would help us if we realised that at no time in their lives are children ignorant of God, that the ground is always prepared for this seed, and that the mother's only care need be to avoid platitudes and hackneyed expressions, and speak with the freshness and fervour of her own convictions. I think we might make more use than we do of the habit of meditation as a means of attaining to the knowledge of God.

If we get some notion as to how to fix the *admiration* of our young people well and wisely, we are still vague about *hope*. But it is necessary that we should clear our thoughts, because, perhaps, the great failure of the age we live in is a failure in hope. It is for lack of hope that we do not in patience wait for an end, or with assiduity work for it. It is because of our failure in hope that we do not build, or plan, or write, for the generations to come. We live for the present, work for the present, and must have immediate returns. We live by hope, says the poet; which means that without hope we do not live; and that there is not life enough for our living

is the secret consciousness of everyone. Therefore, we run after change, excitement, amusement, anything that promises to "pass the time." Therefore, our interests are feeble, our aims low. Without hope, too, there is no fear. We may pray with our lips, "Give us an heart to love and *dread* thee," but we do not *dread*, and upon quite slight provocation men take leave of the life that has been lent to them for a purpose. A straw shows which way the current flows, and that a novelist should have conceived the idea of a hotel convenient for "unostentatious suicide" is a distressing symptom of our ailment. No great works are accomplished by a people without hope; and we in England are not performing great works at the present moment, not in art, literature, architecture, legislation; not in any single field of human endeavour. But nations, like persons, have their times of sickness and of health; and because promise rests with the young, it is worth while to inquire into the causes of this deep-seated disease. They are partly physical, no doubt: we are an over-strained nervous generation; but the means we should take to cure ourselves morally would remove our physical disabilities too. We want a tonic of Hope "well and wisely fixed," and we must bring up young people upon this tonic.

Now, it is exceedingly easy for us to gratify all a child's desires immediately and on the spot. It is so easy to compass this little treat and that, to arrange that every day shall have its treat or its new possession, that the children get used to it and grow up with the habit of constant gratification and without any practice of hope. Even the birthday is forestalled a hundred times in the year, and everything comes—not to him who waits, but to him who wants. We can, at any rate, bring up children in hope; see to it that they wait and work for the bicycle, or the book, or the birthday treat; that they have things to look forward to. Let us feed them with tales of high endeavour and great accomplishment, let them share our distress about those things which are as blots upon our national life, nourish them on the hope that they themselves may do something to make England good and great; show that it is always a single person here or there, from time to time, who raises the nation to higher levels and gives the rest of us something to live up to; that the person who makes a country great may be a poor girl like Grace Darling, or a peasant like Robert Burns, or a retiring gentlewoman like Florence Nightingale, or the son of a labouring man like George Stephenson; that the only conditions required are fitness, preparation, and readiness. We all know how Florence Nightingale prepared and trained herself for a career which did not exist until she made it. The young person who knows that there are great chances of serving their country in wait for those who are ready for them, and that his concern is not to seek the

chance but simply to be ready when it arises, lives a life of hope and endeavour, and will certainly be a profitable citizen to the community.

There is a reason for our hopelessness deeper-seated than the nervous depression and anxiety which beset us, the present gratifications for which we lay ourselves out, or the personal aims which invalidate our efforts. Without hope, we live at a low level, disturbing ourselves with petty cares, distracting ourselves with petty joys. The difficulty is a very real one. We recite, week by week, that we "believe in the life everlasting," but, in this keenly scientific age, we ask, "What is the life everlasting?" and no answer reaches us. It may be that as we make a serious attempt to realise that we are spirits; that knowledge, the knowledge of God, is the ineffable reward set before us; that there is no hint given us of change in place, but only of change of state; that, conceivably, the works we have begun, the interests we have established, the labours for others which we have undertaken, the loves which constrain us, may still be our occupation in the unseen life—it may be that, with such a possibility before us, we shall spend our days with added seriousness and endeavour, and with a great unspeakable Hope.

But, if we would fix such hopes as these well and wisely in the hearts of children, we must think, pray, rectify our own conceptions of life present and to come; so may we arrive at a great Hope for the children and ourselves; and our emergence from the Slough of Despond shall be into a higher life.

We live by *Admiration*, *Hope* and *Love*. Here, surely, all is spontaneous and easy, requiring no effort on our part; and happy is the person, say we, who gets enough love to live upon. But love consists not in getting but in giving, and is distinguished from the tumult of the affections which we commonly so name. Love is, like life, a state, an abiding state, says St. Paul, who has portrayed the divine Charity in such wise that there can never be anything to add whether in conception or practice. If we hope to guide children so that they may well and wisely fix their love, it is necessary that we should give some definite thought to the subject; be clear in our minds as to what we mean by love and how we are to get the power of loving, or rather, to keep it, for we have seen that the little child loves freely. "Now abideth Faith, Hope, Charity, these three." I venture to think that of the three abiding states, if we have lapsed from faith and hope, we yet abide in love. Our neighbour becomes more precious to us; the more he is distressed and uneasy, the more we care for him and labour for his relief; perhaps, indeed, the passion of philanthropy is the feature by which our age will be known to history. "Write me as one who

loves his fellow men,"—may we figure this poor faulty age of ours as offering in extenuation for many short-comings? Let us be thankful and see to it that the children share in this gift of their age. But, because our philanthropy is not always sanctified or instructed, sentimental humanitarianism becomes our danger. None shall endure hardness, is our decree; none shall suffer; especially none shall suffer for wrong-doing; and we are in arms against the righteous severity of God and man. Let us "think clear," that we may correct this attitude of mind in ourselves and for the children. Let us return to the old paths and perceive that life is disciplinary for us and others; that "God's in His heaven, all's right with the world"; that suffering in the present life is no such mighty thing after all; nor, if we go on with our lives, is it so great a thing to be divested of the flesh. If we ourselves love those things which be lovely, why, love is contagious, and the children will do as we do. But, we must not only love wisely and well; we must *fix* our love. Here, I think, is a caution for us in these days of passing enthusiasms, engrossing fads; and we really can do a great deal towards forming the habit of steadfastness in the young people about us.

We have now considered, however inadequately, the greatness of the child as a person, the liberty that is due to him as a person, some forms of oppression which interfere with his proper liberty (most of which come upon him from within), and the aliment which he is to live by—Admiration, Hope, and Love. We have seen that, though we cannot make a child eat, it is our business to put the proper food in his way; and, I think, it must come home to us all that the duty of taking thought, understanding, realising, is that which presses upon us: it is only that which we understand that we can communicate; and what we understand, are really impressed by, we cannot fail to communicate, because it becomes ourselves, manifest in all our speech and action. "Who is sufficient for these things?" we cry with the Apostle; but with him we may add, "I thank my God."

Let me close by repeating again Carlyle's great words: "The mystery of a *Person*, indeed, is ever divine, to him that has a sense of the God-like"; and that wonderful saying of Wordsworth's, which wraps in small compass for our use the secret of how to keep the mystery of a "Person" inviolate:

"We live by Admiration, Hope and Love!"